

Flu and Covid.....

About a week ago I saw our nurse, Tina, do a celebratory dance that the flu jabs arrived. There was genuine excitement as I helped her unpack a couple of boxes into the fridge. Hopefully the first of our flu clinics will be well underway on Saturday 18th September with more planned through the next 8 weeks.

This week has been a big week for Covid - the weekly numbers are going down and boosters are being advised as are jabs for 12-15 year olds. What do we make of it all...

I dialled into a webinar on Thursday delivered by the great and good (Chris Whitty) and the clear message was that while young adults were not particularly at risk of serious illness, they could easily pass covid to vulnerable people and also would miss vital chunks of school. Britain has hesitated to vaccinate this group to consider the balance between the risk to the child disrupting their studies and the risk of spread to more vulnerable groups and decided to go ahead.

I know that vaccinating "children" has been a bit controversial and while I haven't got to worry about the dilemma (as Libby is only 10), I wouldn't hesitate to have her vaccinated as we live next door to her grandparents who are more vulnerable. I think the vaccination programme for this age group has been well considered and as I have followed the "childhood imms" schedule so far so I would have no reason to deviate now.

The webinar explicitly stated that the responsibility for vaccinating 12-15 year olds will lie entirely with the school vaccination programme group and will not be delivered at all by us. I expect that from the middle of next week schools will begin to seek consent for a discussion about vaccination.

News of the boosters has finally arrived. The plan is to offer all adults over 50 or with a long-term condition a booster of Pfizer regardless of the vaccine they had before. The committee has worked out that immunity drops after 6 months but aren't sure what happens after 12 months so admit they are guessing a bit with timing but think a booster is going to be massively important - the timing less crucial, so more a trickle than a rush.

Although we haven't fully committed yet we are expecting to take part so the boosters can be delivered locally. There is no doubt we are in a different phase to last December when we were vaccinating to prevent death and every jab felt like a life saved. It is a huge logistical operation to give 10,000 boosters across the PCN while we are trying to deliver as normal a service as possible so we are looking at how we can realistically offer this and not burn out the staff.

IF, we commit to being involved in the boosters then we will be looking at the same cohorts as before - Care homes first (by the end of October) then age groups down the line so please be patient while each cohort is called in turn (again). We expect this to be a slow purposeful project...

And finally, we have all been involved in offering medical assistance to a group of nearly 200 "displaced migrants" from Afghanistan that are currently in Charing. Although Charing Surgery are doing by far the bulk of the work, we have been humbled to be involved. What I saw was a group of very able and determined people and to see them approach their new life with a sense of humour and appreciation was truly amazing. The experience certainly made me realise again how lucky I am.

More news as it comes...

Best wishes to all, on behalf of the Surgery
Jack Hickey, GP